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ABSTRACT

This handbook is designed to assist women in and aspiring to vocational education administration in planning for entry into and success in vocational education administration. It consists of five sections. Section 1 describes the following barriers inhibiting the progress of women in administration: self-concept, career choice, career preparation, employment, and ambition. In section 2 self-motives, credentials, university choice, training, social network, and visibility are discussed in terms of supports aiding the progress of women in administration. Section 3 contains a literature summary and selected bibliography. Section 4 contains a synthesis of an Illinois state survey on models of and for women aspiring to and in vocational education administration. Topics covered include interpersonal and support factors, hiring practices, professional organization, communication, career commitment, salary, mobility, financial support, teamwork skills, and legislation. Section 5 presents recommendations for women aspiring to and advancing in administration. These requirements involve personal factors (planning for the future, role conflict, seeking identification); skill development (academic credentials, defining skills, documenting experiences, training programs, personal improvement, assessing transferrable skills); and visibility. (A handbook for administrators and board of education members is available separately through ERIC--see note.) (MN)

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Equitunity in Vocational Education Administration: A Handbook for Women

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Abstract

This publication is a comprehensive guide to assist women in and aspiring to vocational education administration in planning for entry into and success in vocational education administration. The handbook is concerned with the interpersonal and personal factors confronting women who aspire to become administrators. The topics addressed in the handbook include:

Introduction

Barriers Inhibiting the Progress of Women in Administration
- Self Concept
- Career Choice
- Career Preparation
- Employment
- Ambition

Supports Aiding the Progress of Women in Administration
- Self Motives
- Credentials
- University Choice
- Training
- Social Networks
- Visibility

Summary of the Literature
- Selected Bibliography

Illinois Study
- Interpersonal Factors—Attitudes
- Support Factors
- Hiring Practices
- Professional Organizations
- Communication
- Career Commitment
- Salary
- Mobility
- Financial Support
- Teamwork Skills
- Women Must Work Harder?
- Legislation
- Conclusions of the Illinois Study

Recommendations for Women Aspiring To and Advancing in Administration
- Personal Factors
  - Planning for the Future
  - Role Conflict
  - Seeking Identification
- Skill Development
  - Academic Credentials
  - Define Skills
  - Document Experiences
  - Training Programs
  - Personal Improvement
  - Assessing Transferable Skills
- Visibility

Conclusion

This is the first publication of the handbook which is to be disseminated to women desiring information relative to entering and succeeding in vocational education administration.

Introduction

Women are underrepresented in administration generally and certainly in vocational education administration. Statistics generally show that women are not rising from the teaching ranks into the administration ranks in proportion to their numbers. Unfortunately, some women who have been promoted into the administrative ranks find themselves retained in entry level positions and/or in positions devoid of authority.

What then are the barriers to their progress?

What supports can be afforded women to help remove the obstacles to progress?

A research team at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale reviewed pertinent literature and reseach studies and found some commonalities regarding women who seek administrative positions and those women who have attained administrative positions in vocational education.

Equitunity is sex equity in vocational education—giving women and men the same chances and choices. It is providing equal educational and career opportunities; erasing existing stereotypes in counseling, programs, and materials; and making educators, administrators, and students themselves aware of habitual sex-role bias. It is removing artificial limits and allowing anyone to plan and pursue any goal—not as "male" or "female," but as a person.

Equal opportunity cannot exist in an environment that does not foster and nourish it. Parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators must continuously work together to create an environment in which females and males feel that their career opportunities are not limited by their sex.

Barriers Inhibiting the Progress of Women in Administration

The barriers facing women who seek administrative positions in vocational education cannot entirely be attributed to the female experience nor to male behavior and beliefs, as is often popularly thought. Rather, cultural and social conditioning and long standing norms have also strongly influenced and continue to influence the current vocational education environment.

Self Concept

Self concept and perception of societal beliefs create problems for women. Our Western culture has socialized females to be passive, noncompetitive, and nurturing. Subtly, females have been taught to avoid success and to accept mandates of total responsibility for home and family. Consequently, rather than dealing with their own needs and ambitions, women often feel they should avoid personal success in order to fulfill the perceived expectations of others. This role conflict may involve her superiors in the educational community, her mate, her children, or perceived societal pressures as a consequence of achievement.

Career Choices

Research shows that women find it very difficult to make objective career choices. Zakrajsek (1976) reports that while receiving minimal parental support and/or encouragement from the educational community, women find it difficult to plan career goals. Unfortunately, there are relatively few women administrators available to serve as occupational role models or mentors for aspiring women administrators.

Career Preparation

A review of literature also provides documentation of another important barrier, i.e., a lack of preparation for administrative positions. This lack includes the psychological and academic preparation necessary for leadership positions.

An area of concern for many students is financial aid. Bowers (1979) suggests that lack of financial aid may be directly related to the reason that some women do not complete academic programs. Women have not had an equal opportunity for financial support while attaining academic credentials necessary for an administrative position. Zakrajsek (1976) cited the G.I. Bill as an example. The G.I. Bill aided many men; however, women did not have an equivalent source of funds. Other researchers also point to disparities of scholarships and grants awarded, or to the rule at many universities that require full-time attendance in order to receive financial aid.

Certainly other factors impact on academic preparation. Included are these factors: discriminatory admissions policies and practices, rigid course timetables, lack of adequate day-care facilities for a student's young children, and academic sexist attitudes.

Employment

Hiring and promotion practices affect not only the initial appointment but also affect future opportunities for advancement. Traditionally, administrative positions have been "sex-typed" as male.

Cronin and Pancrazio (1979) reported that males still dominate school boards in numbers. Other studies suggest that many board members and superintendents still prefer men for administrative positions. Research does not suggest whether or not the community would prefer a male or female administrator. It is fair, then, to speculate that board members and administrators do have a dilemma regarding roles for women and regarding expected behaviors of men and women. No doubt, on numerous occasions school board members feel that the community does not want a female administrator. There is always the "humanitarian" consideration which suggests that possibly a female administrator would displace a male head of household and lead to his unemployment or underemployment.

Paddock (1978) suggests a strong disposition against hiring a married woman for an administrative position. There is some evidence to suggest that male administrators are not convinced that married women can handle the combined responsibilities of marriage, home, children, and administrative position. However, there seems to be an equally strong disposition against hiring a single woman, since it is assumed these women will marry and leave the profession and/or move away.

Ambition

Another major problem area detected in various studies defines the inconsistencies of perception by male administrators and board members relating to women's ambitions and goals in life.

Sites (1975) reported that vocational education directors viewed female teachers as having only moderately high career goals. Makulski (1976) found that superintendents feel that women prefer the classroom to the administrative office. On the other hand, Baughman (1977), in a Detroit public schools study, found that approximately one-half of the women surveyed indicted they were interested and felt qualified to obtain an administrative position.

Anderson (1977) confirms that women, just as men, indeed seek promotion to administrative positions for the same social motives that meet higher order needs for achievement, recognition, responsibility, growth, and service Anderson (1977) substantiates that women do clearly define and accept their career goals.

Supports Aiding the Progress of Women in Administration

What assistance then can be afforded women to help remove the obstacles to administration? Who will provide the necessary support? Certainly much can be done and in fact much is being done.

Self Motives

First of all, women need to look at self. One's interpersonal barriers must be overcome by honestly changing attitudes, life priorities, and capability assessments. Anderson (1977) stated that indeed many women have a strong conviction that career, marriage, and family can successfully be combined.

Credentials

Researchers have found that women can gain much support from attaining the proper academic and social credentials. Cronin and Pancrazio (1979) recommend that women obtain graduate training and necessary academic credentials associated with leadership.

All have acquired transferable skills. For women especially, those skills need to be assessed and then an exploration of individual talents can be conducted. After an individual has made the assessment and has outlined goals for self, a plan of action can be initiated in order to attain the necessary credentials.

University Choice

Zakrajsek (1976) suggests that it is important for women to seek a university of high quality. Other researchers also indicate that women should seek universities that have a reputation for according respect to women students. Women might seek universities that accord fair and equitable admission policies and distribution of financial aid to their female students.

Training

Systematic graduate training with an emphasis in administration is called for in a number of studies. Another suggestion regarding training includes concentration in verbal and written communication. Internships and in-service training have also been cited as important credentials.

Social Networks

Social credentials cannot and should not be ignored by women aspiring to vocational education administration. Writers repeatedly document the need for support in terms of role models and mentors. Women have not sought the help of others to the degree that men have. Terms such as "networking" and the "old boy network" are not unfamiliar terms, but women have traditionally tried to achieve positons without aid and support. Cronin and Pancrazio (1979) suggest that women must learn to ask for help and not view such requests as a sign of weakness.

Visibility

Many researchers such as Costick (1978) firmly believe that there is a critical need for women, while becoming more visible to their professions, to build coalitions, support each other, and share experiences. Visibility can also be achieved by writing for, researching for, traveling with, belonging to and participating in professional organizations. Other strategies include involvement in projects and tasks in which one can demonstrate abilities and competencies.

In order to gain visibility, other suggestions include: join male oriented groups and work with men as equals, submit ideas, do not be afraid to express the worth of talents, have an open mind, listen, take responsibility for self and for actions, relocate to achieve goals, take initiative to use resources, be articulate in stating decisions, be persistent, keep a sense of humor, ignore unfounded criticism, learn a sport, keep physically fit, learn to be competitive, do not interpret every negative or unpleasant act as sexism, and always be clear about playing the role of a woman's advocate.

Support is also available in terms of federal and state legislation. Only within the last decade has an acceleration been observed regarding legal equity issues. Women can be instrumental in the development of affirmative action plans and programs in their respective schools. They can insist that legislative materials be routinely distributed to all faculty members, and they can monitor the dissemination of information regarding position vacancies and hiring practices.

Summary of the Literature

The socialization of males and females to act out certain roles and to behave in either a feminine or masculine manner has certainly contributed to the present environment of vocational education. This phenomenon has been reinforced in society for many years. However, today vocational education is in a state of change. This task of changing attitudes and behaviors is not easy. Therefore, it behooves each person to become introspective because research shows no valid reason for the small number of women in vocational education administration except the attitude of the educational community. Studies do not confirm a lack of interest or qualifications. The talent pool is large enough to warrant larger numbers of women in vocational education administration. The problem of underrepresentation is not solely a woman's problem. Both females and males are responsible for a climate of acceptance for women in vocational education administration.

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Illinois Study

The following is a synthesis of the research study entitled "Models Of and For Women Aspiring To and In Vocational Eduction Administration." This research project was conducted by a research team at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale during the school year 1979-80.

Questionnaires were mailed (1) to all women identified on Illinois State Board of Education records as being either (a) practicing vocational education administrators or (b) administratively cerified teachers, thus potential vocational education administrators, and (2) to a matched sample of men throughout the state of Illinois. With a return of 80 percent, all data from respondents of the survey were categorized and are discussed by groups as follows:

All Persons

All Administrators
- Female Administrators
- Male Administrators

All Teachers
- Female Teachers
- Male Teachers

This section of the handbook attempts to analyze and communicate the perceptions of surveyed teachers and administrators on the issue of women vocational education administrators in illinois. The findings were carefully compared to issues identified in the preceding national review of literature. Differences of perception between Illinois findings and national studies are reported when these differences are notable. The final recommendations of this handbook are based on both the national review of literature and analyzed data obtained from the research conducted in Illinois.

Interpersonal Factors—Attitudes

Interpersonal factors for purposes of this handbook include the attitudes of society regarding the roles of women. It is in this area that females moving into nontraditional roles have encountered many problems. Unfortunately, inherent in our Western culture are certain defined sex role models for women and men. These attitudes are of paramount concern to all interested in supporting women administrators in vocational education.

The Illinois study indicates that female teachers and administrators, as well as male teachers and administrators, disclaim the idea that female vocational education teachers prefer working for male administrators. The study also lends evidence that teachers and administrators do not feel that women, more so than men, are afraid of failure.

All groups also agreed that women are not too polite to express themselves effectively as vocational education administrators. These same groups agreed to the statement: "Assertively seeking an administrative position within the field of vocational education is especially important for a woman in attaining this position."

There is division of thought over whether women and men vocational education administrators are judged according to the evaluator's personal views of appropriate sex roles. Men administrators and teachers responding agreed with this statement while the women teachers and administrators tended to disagree. However, all groups surveyed disagreed with a statement suggesting that women administrators get criticism that relates to being female rather than for job performance.

Support Factors

National studies have indicated that the support of a mate as well as other people in a woman's personal life is essential for a woman aspiring to an administrative position. All groups surveyed in Illinois agreed that women, more so than men, must have the support of their mate in order to become successful vocational education administrators.

On a related issue, all respondent groups agreed that it is important for a potential female vocational education administrator to have a strong and active support group, e.g., home, community, and school. Illinois results substantiate that adequate day care is perceived as more of a problem for women than men while pursuing a position in vocational education administration. The issue of child care seemingly continues to be a woman's issue based on past traditional roles for women.

Hiring Practices

One of the issues regarding the underrepresentation of women administrators in vocational education relates directly to the dynamics of recruitment and hiring practices. An analysis of the survey items on these issues finds the Illinois respondents divided on most issues. Basically, it appears the female teachers feel they are not given much encouragement or consideration for administrative positions as is afforded their male counterparts.

The data lead one to conclude that female administrators and teachers as a combined group, particularly women teachers, feel that recruitment practices are not communicated. All teachers, female and male, agreed that their school district's superintendent is more likely to encourage applications from men rather than from women for vocational education administration positions. The female teachers agreed, while the other groups disagreed, that females cannot rely on male administrators for formal recommendations to move into vocational education adminstration positions. Female teachers felt the board of education in their district would hire a male over an equally qualified female; all administrators, female and male, disagreed with this assertion. Even so, all groups agreed that selection and screening committees are dominated by men and that men in decision-making positions are likely to recommend men rather than women when hiring or promoting.

Another issue where general agreement was found is in the timely issue dealing with the displacement of females or males by the opposite sex. Primarily the question is, do females displace males as vocational education administrators? The Illinois respondents do not perceive the employment of women as leading to the displacement of male administrative candidates. Only the female teachers felt that women holding vocational education administration positions are being replaced by men when these women leave their positions.

All groups participating in the study disagreed with the statement indicating that women receive more encouragement from superiors to seek administrative positions than do men with comparable ability. Likewise, all groups disagreed that it is more difficult for women than men to obtain information about vocational education administration vacancies within school districts.

Professional Organizations

Participation in professional vocational education organizations, e.g., Illinois Vocational Association, is perceived by the Illinois teachers and administrators as very important for a woman aspiring to an administrative position. However, it is interesting to note that all groups responding to the questionnaire do not feel that membership in a feminist organization can benefit a woman aspiring to administration.

Communication

The Illinois study also refutes traditional perceptions regarding women and communication. The Illinois teachers and administrators surveyed are sure that communication does not break down because of sex-role stereotyping in vocational education. These same groups also feel that men do not dominate communication as was reported in the national literature. Other findings indicate that women are *not* too emotional to communicate effectively as vocational educators and that female administrators do relate equally well with female and male teachers. This study also indicates that women vocational education administrators communicate as effectively with people in the community as do their male counterparts.

Still other claims regarding a woman's ability to deal with stress and emotion as reported nationally can be challenged. Illinois teachers and administrators responded, contrary to national studies, that male vocational education administrators cannot handle job pressures any better than the female vocational education administrators.

Career Commitment

An aspiring vocational education administrator needs to demonstrate a high degree of career commitment, assertiveness, and willingness to accept responsibilities. The literature contains numerous reports that suggest one reason women are underrepresented in administration is because many women are not sufficiently committed, assertive or willing to accept the responsibilities required for effective leadership. An analysis of the Illinois study refutes many of these reports.

The responding female teachers, as a group in Illinois, indicated that vocational education administration is a lifetime career goal for them. An analysis of subsequent questions indicates that all persons collectively feel very positive that women are as likely as men to assume greater responsibility. It should be noted that all participant groups are in agreement that women can successfully combine professional duties and the management of a home. Related items on the questionnaire dealt with commitment to a career in vocational education administration. All of the responding groups were positive that women do take their careers in vocational education as seriously as men and are not afraid to give up present job security in order to attain an administrative position.

Salary

The Illinois study cites higher salaries as one reason women teachers seek vocational education administration positions. However, based on collected demographics from this study, women vocational education administrators in Illinois tend to be paid lower salaries than their male counterparts. An analysis of the demographic data also indicates that women have spent fewer years as full-time administrators. This fact may account partially for the differential in salary.

Mobility

A reason frequently given why many women are not promoted to administrative positions is directly linked to the issue of mobility. The Illinois study confirms that many women aspiring to a vocational education administration position may have difficulty getting qualified because they may feel they cannot leave their family to go out of town for training. A related question indicates that female vocational education administrators tend not to move from one school district to another any more often than men holding equivalent positions. Further substantiation of this issue is implied in the demographic data. Female administrators in Illinois reported to have held their current positions a median of seven years while the male administrators reported a median of four years in their current positions.

All groups responding to the questionnaire gave a negative answer to a question implying that women are not encouraged to seek advanced degrees because these women are perceived as unlikely to remain in the work force for an extended period of time. Another negative answer was received on a question implying that unmarried women are not considered for vocational education administration because they are perceived as marrying and leaving the position. Thus, the study indicates that marital status is not a perceived disqualifying factor of consideration for vocational education administration.

Financial Support

When asked if financial support for advanced study is more available for men than women, all groups involved in the study gave a negative answer. These data also contradict much of the national literature reviewed. Thus, financial aid for study is perceived as equitably available to women and men.

Teamwork Skills

When asked about teamwork skills necessary for effective leadership, all Illinois groups responding indicated that women are not inferior in leadership (team-task) skills to males seeking administrative positions.

One area of major concern of this study, as well as for other studies, has been evidence of insufficient leadership development programs within school districts. This study indicates that all responding groups strongly agreed that their school district does not have an active leadership development program which assists in identifying persons, female and male, for vocational education administration positions.

Women Must Work Harder?

The notion reported nationally that women must work harder than men with similar talents and qualifications in order to achieve a vocational educational administration position is neither confirmed nor denied in the Illinois study. All administrators, female and male, as well as female teachers agreed that women are required to work harder while the male teachers denied that this statement is true. Interestingly, all teachers, female and male, and female administrators disagreed while the male administrators tended to agree with the statement: "The best way for females to attain a vocational education administration position is to quietly do a good job." Thus, males are likely to expect females to quietly work harder than their male counterparts.

Legislation

A number of questionnaire items attempted to lend insight into factors relating to sex equity, affirmative action, and legislation impacting on women in vocational education. In this portion of the study, Illinois teachers and administrators both agree and disagree with national studies.

All teachers are very positive that the movement of women into vocational education administration positions is directly related to federal equal opportunity mandates that improve the status of women in general.

All groups, and female teachers in particular, included in the study agree that the women's movement is a positive force for obtaining equal pay and increased job opportunities for women. The same groups gave very positive responses to the statement: "Knowledge of sex-equity laws is important for women in achieving a vocational education administrative position." Despite the fact that the study confirms that teachers and administrators feel the women's movement has had a positive effect in terms of salary and opportunity and that knowledge of sex equity laws is important, all groups, with the exception of the female teachers, feel that more legislation is not needed to help women gain vocational education administration positions.

The study seems to reveal a paradox concerning affirmative action programs and affirmative actions within the school districts of Illinois.

All administrators, female and male, strongly agreed and all teachers, female and male, agreed that within their school districts there is affirmative action to eliminate sexism. However, the statistical data of the study indicate that the school district practices do not include active recruitment of women for vocational education administration positions. Furthermore, the teachers as a combined female and male group feel that their district superintendent is more likely to encourage applications from men rather than from women for voctional education administration positions.

Conclusions of the Illinois Study

The responses support the theory that within Illinois there exists a professional certified talent pool of women committed to the career goal of vocational education administration. These women are willing to accept the responsibility of leadership and have indicated that they are able to manage various other aspects of their personal lives.

The research results have served to question, if not to dispel, some traditional stereotypic views of women in general. In terms of communications, women administrators in vocational education are perceived as effective communicators with people in the community as well as with other women and men in vocational education. The results also strongly suggest that women can cope as well as men with both emotional and physical stress.

The study tends to confirm other studies that suggest that women are not as mobile as men in vocational education. The issue of lack of mobility need not necessarily be considered a negative issue. This perception can also be seen as a positive factor. For example, the participants in this study felt single women are considered for administrative positons because these women are not necessarily perceived as leaving their profession.

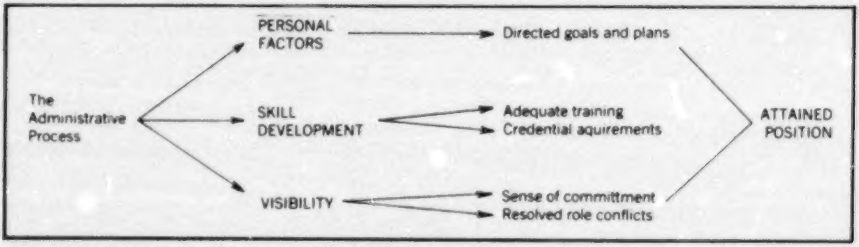
Unfortunately, the research data do not resolve the issue of whether or not women with equal talents have to work harder than men in order to attain administrative positions. Another unresolved issue is that of legislation. The participants of the study felt that the women's movement as well as knowledge of sex equity laws has helped women move into nontraditional areas; however, participants overall disagreed that more legislation is needed to help women attain vocational educational administration positions.

Responding Illinoisans confirm other studies in the nation that indicate men are still predominately recruited and encouraged for administrative positions. Furthermore, individuals who are in authority and who make the decisions to hire and promote are perceived by female teachers as preferring to hire or promote males.

In terms of support, responding Illinoisans agree with other studies that it is essential for a woman to have the support of her mate or individuals involved in her personal life as well as active support from groups in the community and school. They also emphasize that participation in professional education organizations is very important for a woman aspiring to a vocational education administration position. Finally, all groups of Illinoisans participating in this study agreed it is especially important for a woman to assertively seek an administrative position in vocational education.

Recommendations for Women Aspiring To and Advancing In Administrative Positions

The recommendations of the study evolve from and are based upon both the national review of literature and the findings of the research study conducted in Illinois. Recommendations are presented in terms of actions which women might consider to facilitate the attainment of a vocational education administration position. These recommendations are subdivided into three phases: (1) Personal Factors (2) Skill Development (3) Visibility.



A Model for Women Aspiring to and Advancing in Vocational Education Administration

Personal Factors

The Illinois study did not attempt to determine specific personal factors necessary for successful administrative experiences. Therefore, for the purpose of this proposed model, the discussion of interpersonal factors is based primarily on national literature rather than on data from the Illinois research project.

Planning For the Future. "Women need to take control of their own lives," is a statement that is often heard in our contemporary society. The male traditionally has planned his future. Our Western culture does not encourge females to also actively plan their futures. Some females may feel guilty about planning a future of their own and perceive this as departing from the traditional female norms. Unfortunately, there are relatively few people who seek out and encourage young women to think about their own interests, skills, and potential and help them plan concrete goals for their lives.

Certainly much can be done and is being done to help women gain the support required to advance and achieve their future goals. The first step requires that one's interpersonal barriers be overcome by changing attitudes, life priorities, and capability assessments. Women *must* decide to plan for a future and must make the commitment to become successful.

A woman must ask for her family's support, seek a role model, seek a mentor and join other women and support each other, sharing experiences and developing strategies together. Many strategies can be considered to assist an individual wishing to enter, move, or advance into administration. For the purpose of this model, steps to be taken in increments of five-year periods are suggested, recognizing that many of these steps are not exclusive to a particular age group.

Age 20-25
Plan short-range career goals
Plan long-range career goals
Plan for positions to be attained in 5-10 years
Identify and assess your skills necessary to move you from the short-range goals to ultimate career goals
Attain baccalaurate degree
Evaluate the impact of marriage on career
Evaluate mate's attitudes of dual-career family
If children are planned, determine how careers will be affected
Negotiate roles with mate while openly communicating career aspirations

Age 26-30
Attain those experiences and credentials that will move you from short-range goals to ultimate career goals
Attain master's degree and other credentials necessary as prerequisites to the administrative position
Consider the issue of mobility to attain your credentials in light of your objectives and other personal considerations
Reevaluate 5-10 year goals
Plan for positions to be attained in 5-10 years
Learn written and unwritten rules of organization
Choose a person you can trust– a confidant—as a mentor, female or male

Age 31 & Above
Survey the field to determine the best potential to fulfill career goals
If necessary, consider moving to another location to achieve your goals
Develop and participate in women's network for the purpose of coalition building, support, and encouragement
Support others, their ideas, and form linkages with those whose abilities complement your own
Reevaluate 5-10 year goals
Reevaluate ultimate goal

Role Conflict. Many women encounter role conflict and consequently feel confused about their own future goals. Women reportedly feel anxious about conflicts between such roles as homemaker, wife, mother, successful administrator. Single women are not exempt from the vulnerability of similar role conflicts. Many single women are concerned that they have failed as traditional women or that a planned career will inhibit marriage. Some women find it difficult to be aggressive or initiate their own causes partially because of the fear of social isolation. Still other women feel they should avoid personal success in order to fulfill perceived societal mandates of the traditional woman.

Not all role conflict has an immediate solution. Some residue of conflict may always remain. However, it is possible to identify and manage personal role conflict.

Consider the following ways to identify and manage role conflict.

Recognize and identify the specific role conflict
Negotiate between roles
Openly and honestly discuss your interests, ambitions, and concerns with whoever else is involved in your personal life
Establish a clear concept of your commitment to a career goal with people in your life
Openly communicate your professional role, activities, and responsibilities with people in your family structure
Ask for your family's support and understanding
Recognize that guilt will occur; one must learn management of these feelings while concentrating more on trusting self and one's own instincts.

Seeking Identification. A women must trust and value herself while seeking her own identity and meaning for her life, not on the basis of gender but on the basis of what is important for her life. One must become introspective at this point and make choices and commitments to develop as a human being despite all the traditional concepts that might hamper the commitment.

How does a woman seek identification as an administrator? Suggestions include:

Recognize sexism and sexist attitudes; deal with these attitudes
Deal with sexism in a positive, constructive manner; do not become defensive or intimidated
Show concern for how sexism impacts on both women and men, *not* just the negative effect it has on women
Do not interpret every negative act as sexism
Maintain a sense of humor while dealing with sex-biased attitudes
Acquire a strong personal desire to succeed
Be confident of your abilities and knowledge
Acquire a willingness to learn
Develop the ability to cope with failure, to reassess and redirect efforts
Take calculated risks
Keep physically fit
Assume leadership roles and responsibilities; take initiative
Avoid using the traditional female role as an escape
Become an advocate of women; support other women, professional and nonprofessional
Concentrate on your career and discuss aspects of your profession in social environments as well as in the work place
Be committed to affirmative action and sex equity

Skill Development

In the second phase of the model, discussion focuses on preparation for the attainment of a vocational education administration position. The preparatory stage includes formal and informal education as well as work experience credentials.

Academic Credentials. After a woman has determined that she aspires to a vocational education administrative position, she must obtain the necessary academic credentials. Much has been written regarding the type of university a woman should seek. A general consensus based on the national review of literature suggests:

Seek an administrative preparation program in a university of high quality
Seek a university that has a reputation for affording respect to women
Determine the availability of financial aid
Seek programs designed to meet special entry and re-entry needs
Seek a university with flexible enrollment practices

Define Skills. Skills of particular importance for administrators include verbal and written communication skills. An aspiring administrator must also possess interpersonal skills in order to work effectively with teachers, parents, students, administrators, and the community. In addition, management skills must be included. Since legislation has served as a vehicle for resolution of sex equity issues, knowledge of legislation cannot be dismissed. More specific suggestions include:

Learn skills associated with team work
Openly communicate with subordinates as well as superiors
Become involved in coalition building
Acquire skills needed for assessment and decision making
Learn how to influence others
Concentrate on interpersonal skills relating to public relations
Learn skills dealing with time management

Learn to use influence, the system of relationships
Learn to delegate responsibility
Know sex equity laws
Accept professional losses without suffering personal effacement

Document Experiences. Documentation of successful teaching experiences and other related administrative experiences is of utmost importance. In order to gain administrative experience a woman might consider the following suggestions:

Submit ideas
Have an open mind
Listen
Take responsibility
Take initiative to use resources
Be persistent
Be realistic about change
Volunteer for work where you can demonstrate your talents; however, avoid slipping into traditional female roles
Log administrative activities in order to document experiences

Training Programs. Additional training in the form of workshops and in-service training is endorsed generally as an integral part of leadership training. However, an aspiring woman administrator does not have to limit her role to being a learner; she might very well help initiate and plan workshops. The following are more specific recommendations for training:

Seek an internship or apprenticeship where you will be permitted to participate in an administrative role and thereby learn specific administrative skills
Attend seminars, workshops, and in-service training programs that deal with issues confronting the woman administrator; sample topical areas include: sex equity, legislation, assertiveness training, conflict management, time management
Become an active participant as initiator and/or planner of seminars and workshops

Personal Improvement. Physical fitness is mentioned very often as necessary for leadership responsibilities. Not only does physical fitness help provide a sense of well being, but games and sports foster the spirit of competitiveness.

One must be able to deal with sexism in education. In this regard, a sense of humor is a must. While women articulate the issues of sex equity, they must also keep their goals in perspective.

Know yourself
Value and appreciate yourself
Care for your physical health
Learn a sport, such as tennis, golf, or racquetball
Examine, study, and research attitudes on sexism
Possess a sense of humor
Keep goals in perspective; keep your eye on the target

Assessing Transferable Skills. A paramount task is the assessment of transferable skills. The honest and objective assessment of personal and technical skills is very important. If this task is particularly difficult, contact a continuing education department at a university, find a women's counseling center, or a trusted mentor and/or administrator.

Once specific tasks that have been performed successfully and tasks which you are capable of performing have been recorded, a plan can be formalized. The plan should be constructed in order that you can readily see where you are now in relation to your ultimate career goals. The following questions might be considered while preparing the plan:

What credentials are necessary for the position?
What new skills will I need to learn?
What positions must I hold between now and then?
Who will help me?

Visibility

The first step of this model indicated that a woman must make a commitment to a career; she must decide to become successful. The second step outlined the training required, and finally, one must deal with the issue of how to let other people know about goals and plans.

Traditionally, women have been reluctant to deal with the issue of visibility or social credentials. Somehow women have allowed themselves to believe that performance will be justly rewarded. Here again, a woman needs to take control of her own life and plan. What then can a woman do in order to become more visible to her profession? Recommendations include:

Seek the aid and support of others, both women and men
Identify mentors that can provide aid, counsel, and opportunity
Sponsoring or mentoring demands skills of negotiation, assertiveness, intellectual and emotional honesty by both the mentor and the protegee
Choose mentors that are secure as individuals
Choose mentors you genuinely like and admire for their competency and skills
Research to determine if potential mentors have already served as mentors and determine abilities in mentoring
Recruit a number of mentors to serve various purposes
Seek a role model; study and try to emulate successful traits
Participate in women's support groups
Recognize and lend support to others, particularly other women
Make yourself known to and involve yourself in the internal communication network within the school district
Meet and regularly communicate with vocational education administrators outside of the school district
Develop a positive relationship with townspeople, particularly with identified individuals that can help you gain visibility
Attain visibility by writing, researching, lecturing, and traveling
Actively participate in professional organizations
Participate actively as learner as well as leader of seminars, workshops, and other in-service activities
Consistently demonstrate high levels of professional competence

Conclusion

A woman needs to recognize the concepts and tools required to evaluate the costs and rewards of a career commitment to vocational education administration. A woman must be able to see with confidence the career she wants and be willing to confront the problems enroute to her goal.